

Quality Leadership Is the Foundation for Successful Reform



This CROSS TALK issue highlights two interviews with the leaders of major weapon systems programs at Eglin Air Force Base. The success of the Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air Missile (AMRAAM) and Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile (JASSM) programs can be found in a 30 percent or better reduction in purchase price, and a projected reduction in lifetime ownership cost. Acquisition reform is credited with their success. But what I saw was enthusiastic leadership and vision committed to an achievable goal. AMRAAM Director Judy Stokley and JASSM Manager Terry Little are champions of acquisition reform, but I saw that their ability to lead, coupled with the freedom to make decisions, would bring them success under any label. Their vision combined with an ability to communicate with supporting staff created cooperation among government employees and a partnership with contractors. Acquisition reform in the hands of good leaders eliminates the traditional adversarial relationship between contractor and government, and replaces it with an environment of trust in which problems can be efficiently resolved and goals achieved.

The JASSM success began by placing great emphasis on evaluating contractors' past performance. More effort was expended in evaluating past performance than in the source selection process. Once the contractor was selected both AMRAAM and JASSM government personnel directed their energy to helping the contractor succeed instead of overseeing his activities. Contractors were not told how to do their job, but they were held accountable for the results, and warranties were expected and obtained for the final product. In a pre-acquisition reform environment Stokley cited an example of government always tasking the contractor to do the wrong thing, like measuring turn-around time during repair functions when the real goal was availability. When the contractor became a partner and was asked how to improve availability, the answer was simple. "Stop measuring turn-around time, and grade them on availability," she said. Not too surprisingly when the right goal was measured, it was achieved.

This issue also has an important message by Kristen J. Baldwin for acquisition programs. Baldwin leads a Tri-Service Assessment Initiative instituted by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition. The initiative's primary objective is assisting Department of Defense program managers by providing a comprehensive review of their programs. Risks are identified and recommendations are made to mitigate those risks. Participation is voluntary and results are strictly program oriented. This initiative is inclusive and goes beyond the software boundaries into hardware and program issues. The Software Technology Support Center has participated as assessment members in these reviews, and we find them beneficial.

Evaluating the contractor's ability to perform is a common theme among acquisition organizations. The Army approached this challenge by developing a Process Risk Evaluation (PRE) tool. PRE is based on the Capability Maturity Model® and helps choose a winning bidder in the source selection process. To learn more read *Evaluating Risk in Competitive Procurements*, by Timothy Carrico, Jeffrey Herman, Linda Blades, Mary Slagle, and Dennis O'Connor

This issue also contains an article from the Navy on Independent Verification and Validation (IV&V). It provides a methodology for writing an IV&V plan based on the Institute of Electrical Engineers' standards, and updated as a result of three U. S. Navy project iterations. For more information read *Writing an Effective IV&V Plan*, by Dan F. Walters. We hope that you find this issue of CROSS TALK useful, and we welcome your comments and contributions.



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